

► Research Brief

October 2026

Young digital platform workers in Cambodia: Evidence and insights

Key points

- An ILO survey of 1,237 digital platform delivery riders, tuk-tuk drivers and taxi drivers in Phnom Penh found that young workers (aged 18–30) accounted for 42.9 per cent of all respondents and more than three quarters (75.7 per cent) of delivery riders. The digital platform workforce was overwhelmingly male across all platform types.
- Among young workers, better pay (84.7 per cent), flexible work schedules (70.2 per cent) and difficulties in finding alternative employment (63.5 per cent) were the most commonly cited reasons for engaging in platform work.
- Young workers were more likely than older workers to depend exclusively on platform work, with 89.1 per cent relying on a single platform and having no other job.
- Platform work was characterized by long working hours, with young workers typically working 6.7–6.8 days per week and 11–11.6 hours per day on average, including time spent waiting for assignments.
- Across all platform types, young platform workers reported lower gross and net earnings than their older counterparts. Average gross monthly earnings among young platform workers ranged from US\$460 for tuk-tuk drivers to US\$533 for taxi drivers, compared with US\$482 to US\$603 among older platform workers in the respective occupations.
- Young workers reported higher rates of work-related injury than older workers (27.1 per cent compared with 19.3 per cent), particularly in delivery services.
- Nearly half (49.2 per cent) of young platform workers reported having no social security coverage, compared with 43.6 per cent of their older cohorts. Across all platform types, 44.6 per cent of young workers were enrolled in the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), with most covered under the NSSF's voluntary healthcare scheme.

► Introduction

Background

Digital labour platforms have become an increasingly visible feature of Cambodia's labour market, particularly in urban areas, creating employment opportunities through ride-hailing, food delivery and other app-based services. Growth in the sector has been supported by expanding internet access, widespread mobile phone use and continued investment in digital infrastructure. Cambodia's large informal economy has also contributed to the growth of platform work, which offers relatively accessible entry into income-generating activities for many workers. The platform economy is particularly important for young men, who are disproportionately represented in platform work, especially in delivery services.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has identified digital transformation as a key driver of economic development through the Pentagonal Strategy (Phase I), the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020–2030 and other frameworks supporting the growth of the digital economy. The forthcoming National Employment Policy 2026–2035 also recognizes the growing role of digital platform work in Cambodia's labour market. In addition, the Government has introduced measures to support the formalization of workers in the informal economy, including extending coverage under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).

As in many countries, platform workers in Cambodia are commonly classified by platform operators as independent contractors or "partners" rather than employees, leaving them outside the scope of the Cambodian Labour Law (1997), the Law on Trade Unions

and the Law on Social Security Schemes (2019). This has generated growing discussion among policymakers regarding working conditions, occupational safety and health, social security coverage and the broader regulatory framework governing the platform economy.

Methodology

This brief complements the ILO's *Diagnostic Review of Working Conditions and Social Security Coverage of Digital Platform Workers in Cambodia* by examining survey findings through the specific lens of young workers.² While the main report presents findings for platform workers overall, this brief highlights areas where the experiences of young workers differ from those of older workers, with particular attention on worker profiles, earnings, working time, occupational safety and health and social security.

The analysis draws on the same survey of 1,237 platform workers in Phnom Penh conducted in the second half of 2025 as part of the broader diagnostic study. The survey included more than 400 respondents from each of the three platform types: delivery, tuk-tuk and taxi services.³ The findings presented are descriptive of the survey sample and should not be interpreted as nationally representative. Consistent with the definition of youth in Cambodia's National Policy on Youth Development, this brief focuses on young platform workers aged 18–30 years.⁴

¹ This brief was authored by Jong Eun Oh, Director and Senior Research Fellow, Labor Welfare Research Institute, Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service, and Phu Huynh. The authors benefited from the overall guidance of Xiaoyan Qian, Director of the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific and Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and the insightful contributions of Kenichi Hirose, Uma Rani and Socheata Sou.

² ILO, *Diagnostic Review of Working Conditions and Social Security Coverage of Digital Platform Workers in Cambodia*, 2026.

³ For full technical details of the survey methodology, please see: ILO, 2026, chapter 2 and annexes 2–4.

⁴ Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, *National Policy on Youth Development*, 2011. See also: National Youth Development Council, *National Action Plan on Youth Development 2022–2026*, 2022.

► Key findings: Young workers in Cambodia's platform economy

Profile of young platform workers

Of the 1,237 platform workers surveyed, 531 (42.9 per cent) were aged 18–30 (Annex table A1). Young workers were heavily concentrated in delivery services, where they accounted for 75.7 per cent of all delivery riders surveyed. By contrast, older workers aged 31 and above were more prevalent in tuk-tuk and taxi services, accounting for 78.7 per cent and 68.4 per cent of workers, respectively.

Across all platform types, young platform workers were overwhelmingly male, a pattern consistent with that observed among the broader platform workforce. However, women accounted for 9 per cent of the young delivery riders compared to only 4 per cent of the older group of delivery riders. Furthermore, young workers in delivery services generally reported higher educational attainment at the secondary and tertiary levels than their older counterparts.

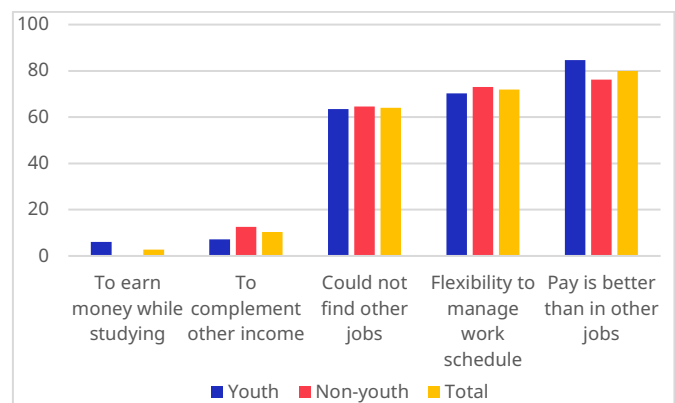
The largest differences between young and older workers relate to household characteristics. Across all platform types, young workers are substantially less likely to be married or have children. Among delivery riders, for example, 20 per cent of young workers were married compared with 50 per cent of older workers, while 19 per cent reported having children compared with 67 per cent of their older counterparts. Similar patterns are observed among tuk-tuk and taxi drivers. These differences largely reflect the younger age profile of young platform workers, who are less likely to have family responsibilities.

Platform engagement and tenure

As shown in figure 1, young and older workers reported broadly similar motivations for engaging in platform work. Across both age groups, the most frequently cited reasons were better pay, flexibility in managing work schedules and difficulties in finding alternative employment. Notably, young workers were more likely than older workers to report that platform work offered better pay (84.7 per cent compared with 76.2 per cent), while nearly two thirds of workers in both age groups indicated that they had entered platform work because they could not find other jobs. These findings suggest that platform work is valued not only for its income-generating potential and

flexibility, but also for offering an accessible employment option for jobseekers who face difficulties in securing alternative work.

► **Figure 1. Reasons for seeking platform work by age group (per cent)**



Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above. Multiple responses were possible.

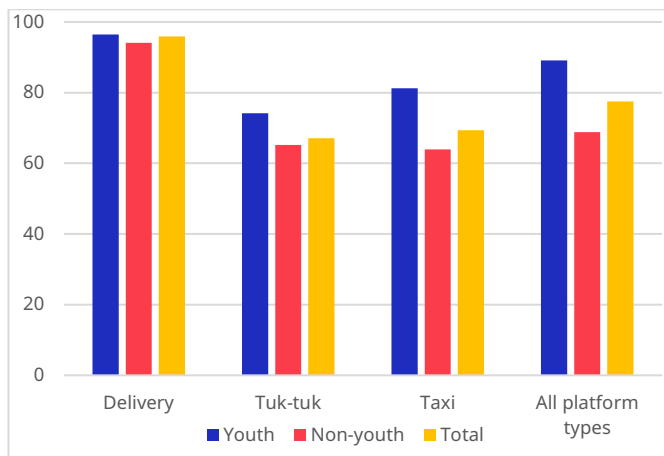
Source: ILO, 2026.

Platform delivery riders were far more likely than ride-hailing drivers to rely exclusively on a single platform and have no additional employment (figure 2). This was true for both young and older workers, with 96.5 per cent and 94.1 per cent of delivery riders, respectively, reporting exclusive engagement with a single platform. By comparison, exclusive single-platform engagement was considerably lower among tuk-tuk and taxi drivers, particularly among older workers. Across all platform types combined, 89.1 per cent of young workers reported both relying on a single platform and having no secondary job compared with 68.8 per cent of older workers.

Platform work experience varies considerably by age group (table 1). Young workers generally reported shorter tenure than older workers across all platform types. Among young delivery riders, 45.2 per cent had been engaged in platform work for less than one year, compared with 19.0 per cent of older delivery riders. Similar trends were observed among tuk-tuk and taxi drivers, with young workers consistently concentrated among those with shorter periods of platform experience. Overall, a vast majority (60–86 per cent) of all young

platform workers had been engaged on digital labour platforms for less than two years.

► **Figure 2. Share of platform workers engaged on a single platform and without a secondary job by age group and platform type (per cent)**



Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.
Source: ILO, 2026.

These findings are consistent with the younger age profile of platform workers and indicate that many young workers have entered the platform economy relatively recently. However, the survey data cannot substantiate conclusions regarding longer-term employment trajectories, including whether platform workers subsequently transition to other forms of employment or remain engaged in platform work throughout their career.

► **Table 1. Distribution of platform workers by tenure, age group and platform type (per cent)**

		<1 year	1–2 years	2–3 years	3+ years
Delivery	Youth	45.2	28.9	20.8	5.1
	Non-youth	19.0	30.6	35.5	15.7
Tuk-tuk	Youth	32.3	27.7	29.2	10.8
	Non-youth	10.8	15.6	30.4	43.2
Taxi	Youth	64.6	21.2	12.1	2.0
	Non-youth	41.2	19.0	25.8	14.1

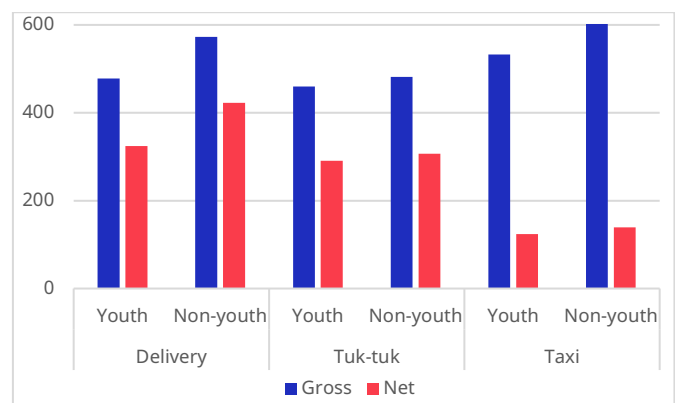
Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.
Source: ILO, 2026.

Earnings and expenses

One of the most notable differences between young and older platform workers in Cambodia relates to earnings. Across all three platform types, young workers reported lower earnings than their older counterparts, both before and after accounting for operating expenses (figure 3). The earnings gap was most pronounced among delivery

riders, where young platform workers reported average net monthly earnings of US\$324 compared with US\$423 among older workers. Similar patterns were observed among ride-hailing tuk-tuk drivers and taxi drivers, although the earnings gaps were smaller.

► **Figure 3. Average earnings, gross and net, by age group and platform type (US\$)**



Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.
Net earnings refer to earnings after deducting operational expenses or costs. Expenses include fuel costs, phone costs, equipment costs and vehicle registration, insurance and repairs.
Source: ILO, 2026.

Differences in earnings were primarily driven by consistently lower gross earnings rather than higher operating costs. Young delivery riders reported average gross monthly earnings of US\$478 compared with US\$573 among older delivery riders. By comparison, young taxi drivers reported gross earnings of US\$533 compared with US\$603 among older workers. Operating expenses were broadly similar across age groups within each platform type.

Despite lower earnings relative to older platform workers, a majority of young workers across all platform types reported that their income was sufficient to cover their household expenditures and financial obligations (table 2). Overall, 74.6 per cent of young workers described their earnings as "just enough", compared with 69.1 per cent of older workers. The lower reported level of income adequacy among older platform workers may partly reflect their greater family responsibilities, as they were considerably more likely to be married and have children than young workers. At the same time, income adequacy remains a concern for many young workers as well, with one quarter of young platform taxi drivers and nearly one third of young platform tuk-tuk drivers reporting that their earnings were insufficient.

These findings suggest that while platform work provides an important source of income for many young workers, earnings remain lower than those reported by older workers across all platform types. Moreover, a notable share of young platform workers, particularly among taxi and tuk-tuk drivers, reported that their earnings were insufficient to meet their household financial needs. Given the high levels of exclusive engagement in platform work as their sole source of employment and income, limited earnings may have a greater impact on their overall economic security.

► **Table 2. Distribution of platform workers by income adequacy, age group and platform type (per cent)**

		Not enough	Just enough	More than enough
Delivery	Youth	19.4	77.1	3.5
	Non-youth	11.9	83.2	5.0
Tuk-tuk	Youth	30.3	67.4	2.2
	Non-youth	32.6	65.5	1.8
Taxi	Youth	25.0	73.4	1.6
	Non-youth	25.6	68.2	6.1
All platform types	Youth	22.6	74.6	2.8
	Non-youth	26.9	69.1	4.0

Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.

Income adequacy is based on respondents' self-assessment of whether their income from platform work is sufficient to cover household expenditures and financial obligations.

Source: ILO, 2026.

Working time

Platform work in Cambodia was characterized by long working times across all age groups and platform types. As shown in table 3, workers reported working on average between 6.6 and 6.8 days per week and between 10.9 and 11.6 hours per day, including time spent waiting for assignments. Across all platform types, young workers reported slightly longer working hours than their older counterparts.

Among young workers, tuk-tuk drivers reported the longest working days, averaging 11.6 hours per day and 6.8 days per week. Young delivery riders and taxi drivers also reported long working schedules, averaging around 11 hours and 11.4 hours per day, respectively, and 6.7 days per week. Differences between young and older platform workers were relatively modest but consistently showed longer working time among younger workers.

In addition to long working hours, platform workers spent a substantial amount of time waiting for assignments or

customers. As in the main diagnostic study, unpaid waiting time includes periods spent connected to the platform while awaiting orders or between tasks. Young workers reported slightly lower waiting times than older workers across all platform types, ranging from 2.0 to 2.4 hours per day compared with 2.1 to 2.5 hours among older workers.

► **Table 3. Working and waiting time by age group and platform type**

	Delivery		Tuk-tuk		Taxi	
	Youth	Non-youth	Youth	Non-youth	Youth	Non-youth
Days worked per week	6.7	6.6	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.7
Hours worked per day	11.0	10.9	11.6	11.4	11.4	11.1
Waiting time per day (hours)	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.4

Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.

“Waiting time” refers to periods when workers are logged into the platform and available for work but are not actively completing a task. This can include: (i) waiting time after accepting an order (for example, waiting at a restaurant or pickup point for the order to be ready); and (ii) gaps between tasks while waiting for the next job offer.

Source: ILO, 2026.

Overall, the findings suggest that young workers spend slightly more time actively engaged in platform work and somewhat less time waiting for tasks than older workers. Nonetheless, both groups reported long working hours and limited rest days, underscoring the significant time commitment associated with platform work across delivery, tuk-tuk and taxi services in Cambodia.

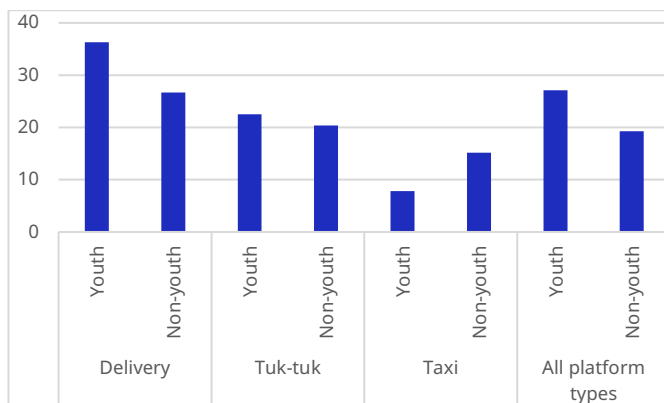
Occupational safety and health

Long working hours are an important consideration when examining occupational safety and health risks in the platform economy. In the Cambodia survey, young platform workers reported higher rates of work-related injury than older workers across all platform types combined (figure 4). Overall, 27.1 per cent of young workers reported having experienced a work-related injury, compared with 19.3 per cent of older workers.

The difference was most pronounced among platform delivery riders, where more than one-third of young workers (36.3 per cent) reported a work-related injury, compared with 26.7 per cent of older delivery riders. Injury rates were also slightly higher among young tuk-tuk drivers (22.5 per cent compared with 20.4 per cent), while

the opposite pattern was observed among platform taxi drivers, where young workers reported lower injury rates than their older counterparts (7.8 per cent compared with 15.2 per cent).

► **Figure 4. Share of platform workers who had experienced a work-related injury by age group and platform type (per cent)**



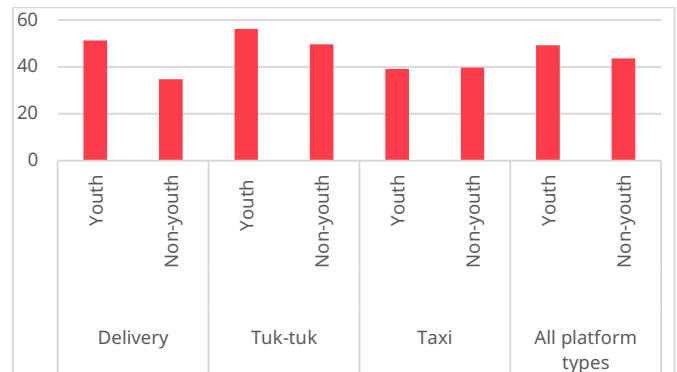
Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.
Source: ILO, 2026.

The high share reporting work-related injuries among young delivery riders is particularly noteworthy given their strong concentration in the platform delivery sector and their high levels of reliance on platform work as a sole source of employment. Combined with the long working hours reported by many delivery riders, these findings underscore the importance of occupational safety and health in understanding the working conditions of young platform workers.

Social security

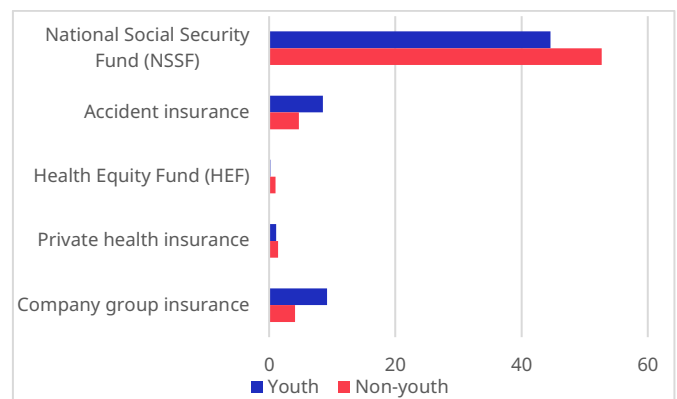
Despite higher rates of work-related injury, access to social security remains limited among platform workers in Cambodia, particularly among young workers. As shown in Figure 5, nearly half of all young platform workers (49.2 per cent) reported having no social security coverage of any kind, compared with 43.6 per cent of older platform workers. The gap was most pronounced among delivery riders, where 51.3 per cent of young workers reported having no social security coverage, compared with 34.7 per cent of older delivery workers.

► **Figure 5. Share of platform workers without social security coverage by age group and platform type (per cent)**



Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above. Social security coverage includes enrolment in the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), accident insurance, Health Equity Fund (HEF), private health insurance and/or company group insurance.
Source: ILO, 2026.

► **Figure 6. Social security coverage by type and age group (per cent)**



Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.
Source: ILO, 2026.

Figure 6 indicates that across all platform types, enrolment in the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) was lower among young workers (44.6 per cent) than among older workers (52.7 per cent), with most covered under the NSSF's voluntary healthcare scheme.⁵ While accident insurance coverage was somewhat higher among young workers than older workers (8.5 per cent compared with 4.7 per cent), overall levels of coverage remained low.⁶ This is notable given that more than one quarter of young

⁵ Among the surveyed workers with NSSF coverage, regardless of age group, the vast majority were enrolled through the voluntary scheme. The voluntary scheme includes medical care, maternity benefits and a funeral grant, but does not include pension, invalidity, survivors', unemployment or child benefits.

⁶ Accident insurance refers to coverage reported by respondents under private insurance arrangements, including insurance schemes provided through platform operators.

platform workers reported having experienced a work-related injury, as discussed previously. Taken together, the findings suggest that many young platform workers

remain outside existing social security mechanisms despite their high levels of occupational injury risk.

► Conclusion

Young workers account for a substantial share of the digital platform workforce and are particularly concentrated in delivery services, where they represent more than three quarters of all platform workers that were surveyed in Phnom Penh. Platform workers remain overwhelmingly male across all platform types, while differences in family characteristics mostly reflect the age profile of the younger platform workers.

Better pay, flexible work schedules and difficulties in finding alternative employment were cited by young workers as the most common reasons for engaging in platform work. In addition, compared with older workers, young platform workers are more likely to rely exclusively on platform work and a single platform as their sole source of employment, particularly in the delivery sector.

Despite their strong engagement in the platform economy, young workers reported lower earnings than older workers across all platform types, both before and after accounting for operating expenses. Nonetheless, work on digital labour platforms provides an important source of income for many young workers, the majority of whom reported that their earnings were sufficient to meet

their household expenditures and financial obligations. Platform work was also characterized by long working hours, with young workers reporting slightly longer working days than their older counterparts.

Particularly in the delivery sector, young platform workers reported higher rates of work-related injury than older workers. At the same time, access to social security remained limited, with nearly half of young platform workers reporting no social security coverage. The gap was especially pronounced among young delivery riders, who faced high risk of work injury with relatively low levels of social security coverage.

The findings presented in this brief provide an initial information base on the situation of young digital platform workers in Cambodia. Continued monitoring and research will be important to better understand how platform work continues to evolve and shape labour market outcomes for young people. This evidence can inform ongoing policy discussions on the sustainable development of the platform economy and the promotion of decent work in the sector.

► Annex

► Table A1. Distribution of survey respondents by age group and platform type (per cent)

Worker characteristic	Youth (n=531)			Non-youth (n=706)		
	Delivery (n=314)	Tuk-tuk (n=89)	Taxi (n=128)	Delivery (n=101)	Tuk-tuk (n=328)	Taxi (n=277)
Sex						
Male	91	98	100	96	98	99
Female	9	2	0	4	2	1
Education level						
Secondary school or lower	32	46	15	54	64	21
Secondary diploma	55	49	57	42	32	61
Technical or university	13	4	28	4	3	18
Married						
Yes	20	43	46	50	66	73
No	80	57	54	50	34	27
Have children						
Yes	19	43	41	67	87	88
No	81	57	59	33	13	12
Main platform used						
Grab	42	11	47	46	13	47
PassApp	2	80	10	3	83	29
Others	56	9	43	51	3	25

Note: Youth aged 18–30 years; non-youth aged 31 years and above.

Source: ILO, 2026.

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